

THE CINCINNATUS
ASSOCIATION

Reflections

On 75 Years of Association Service
May 1996



Preface

In February 1920, Victor Heintz brought a group of Cincinnati leaders together to address the issue of political corruption in Cincinnati, and thus the Cincinnati Association was born. At the 75th anniversary in 1995, the following collection was made of memories and reflections of 32 Association presidents from 1950-1995.

Introduction

Asked to contribute again to The Cincinnati Association, the past presidents accomplished the task with insight and humor. The occasion was the 75th anniversary of our organization and the charge was to briefly share highlights of their presidency and their Cincinnati experience. The purpose of this book is to remind us what it takes to be a Citizen Crusader.

The strands of service flowing over these many years, from one Cincinnati president to another, show us the valuable continuity of commitment to service. These perspectives encourage us to delve in personally to understand the depths of the concepts and debate the issues so that we can influence solutions to the ongoing challenges affecting our region.

We appreciate all who generously and graciously participated in this effort, and we hope that you find their words help rekindle a “fire in the belly” for our mission.

The 75th Anniversary Committee

Nancy Stamberger, chair

Bill Clark

Helen Hinckley

John Simpkinson

Steve Wright

Edmund J. Adams
President, 1977-1978

During my term in office, we talked about violence on television (what hasn't changed in 20 years?). We held a meeting at the school tax levy headquarters, manning the phone banks. We took the bus to Columbus to meet with Governor Rhodes about public school financing (he was with us in body, if not spirit). We concerned ourselves with the system for filling city council vacancies, and we had Stan Aronoff and Tom Atkins debate before us.

My more memorable Cincinnatus experience, however, occurred the year before, in 1976. It was what Ron Roberts during his CBS tenure told me was the dumbest thing I ever did. But that comment was made several years ago; he's had time to make another selection.

"The dumbest thing I ever did" was to think up the amendment to the City Charter in 1976 increasing council salaries from a paltry \$8,000 per year to three-fourths of the County Commissioners' salaries. It passed by about 51% of the vote. We thought higher salaries would attract a higher caliber of candidate. We were concerned about what we were getting on Council and thought that meaningful compensation might make a difference.

You can judge for yourself whether we accomplished that. You know Ron Roberts' opinion. Ron argued that part-time compensation attracted part-time councilpersons, people who had another life, who were successful in that other life and who really didn't need the council job. He contended that by raising the salary we created a full-time job that attracted another sort of candidate. He wished we'd left it alone. Whether we proved right or wrong, we did promote an attitude in the '70s that the City Charter was Cincinnatus' baby, conceived and brought to life by Cincinnatus, a document in which Cincinnatus had an almost proprietary interest. When Charter revisions are suggested, Cincinnatus should step forward as its guardian and assume an influential role. That wouldn't be the dumbest thing Cincinnatus ever did.

Richard N. Adams
President, 1988-1989

The request I received was to share with you some of the highlights of my year as president of The Cincinnatus Association. For most of us, this would be a very short piece, as Cincinnatus works diligently but not a lot happens in the course of a year. While I feel there were some significant events in 1988-89 (a fabulous year), which I will share with you, there were some thoughts prior to that, that deserve mention:

1978 - During my second year as a member, I was on a presenting panel. Two things: I was not at all comfortable talking about environmental issues, which I knew very little about, with a membership I did not know very well but, second, a reminder to *get in and get active* and it will be a much more valuable experience.

1983 - As head of the Local Government Panel, we spent three months trying to decide what to do. Finally, in October, we decided to make Sy Murray, then city manager, the focus of an expert panel on privatization. This could help Cincinnati make intelligent decisions on what city services might be turned over to private enterprise. This was an outstanding success; speakers from five other nationally recognized communities, a crowd of about 100 for a daylong meeting, and a commitment to follow the efforts to use private services. *A real win for Cincinnatus.*

1987 - *Cincinnatus gets smart.* After many years of very low dues and each member paying for meals as eaten, the dues structure has changed to include the cost of meals. The executive committee quickly moved from a constant worry about money to concentrating on more important matters. Our treasury has been healthy ever since.

As for the 1988-89 Cincinnatus year, it started off with one of the most outstanding programs the Association has ever put on. The Cacophony of Cincinnatus was staged at St. Paul's Church in Over-the-Rhine and was extremely well received. We tried to take a hard look at ourselves and reflect on the diversity of our endeavors. We were focused on many different fronts and we attempted to highlight this with some extreme examples - Mike Krug speaking from the dead, the late Jeff Hurwitz as the Reverend Jeffy Bob with his "drive-in" confessional, and Bruce Petrie addressing the group in a toga and speaking Latin, with his daughter as an interpreter. I'm sure I've missed some key players, but what a great start of my year.

(Continued on the next page)

(Richard N. Adams, continued)

The first meeting in the fall presented the third annual Jim Jacobs Award to John Knoechel. Cincinnatus has been outstanding in supporting this award program. The recipients were very helpful in later years in helping us understand the serious problems with the schools and how we could help.

The year was dominated by local government issues on PR [proportional representation], a memorable debate at the Vineyards, and mental health issues as we reviewed the developments at Drake Hospital. The final meeting was an outstanding occasion at The Sovereign restaurant and an in-depth review of work being done with the West End/Union Terminal efforts, another Cincinnatus success.

Robert H. Allen

President, 1967-1968

Serving on the Association's executive committee from 1962 to 1969 and as president for the year 1967-68 was fun and exciting. The people I had a chance to work with - Frazer, Black, Simpkinson, and Acomb, among others - were wonderful, imaginative men, and likable to boot.

During this period, the history of the Association was commissioned and, while I don't recall having any role in this project, the book bears a copyright date of my presidential year. I was involved with the development of the "panel" concept. If memory serves, Bumpy Frazer built on the idea and in his term fitted it into the permanent structure.

A big excitement of the early '60s was the Association's work, led by Acomb and Simpkinson, on the riverfront and the convention center. Frank Dale was an energetic worker. We took field trips (mine was to St. Louis) to get ideas. My special contribution was out of the dictionary. An architectural contest was to be held for a signature structure to be built on the riverfront. What to call it? I found the word "Symbolon" in Webster's and that became the name of the serio-comic program ending in no Symbolon and a big win for the Convention Center bond issue.

Frank J. Andress

President, 1965-1966

I was president of Cincinnatus in the 1965-66 period. Although that is over 30 years ago, I remember it well.

We had an active organization, primarily concerned about downtown development and regional government. We implemented the procedure of voting on key resolutions, developed by our members, and then passing those results on to responsible civic officials. We hoped to thereby influence positive action as an outgrowth of our research and debate.

Cincinnatus has made a positive contribution to the civic spirit of this great city. Its influence goes far beyond the geographic boundaries of the city alone. I'm proud to have played a minuscule role in that process.

Vincent H. Beckman

President, 1975-1976

CINCINNATUS' ROLE IN THE 1970'S

I have two special recollections about the Cincinnatus years in the 1970s:

One is the great effort that was put forth by the Schools Committee of the Association in those and prior years for our Cincinnati Public Schools system. This was in connection with the election of members of the school board, although that role did change and decline (through no fault of the Association) in the late '70s.

Secondly, I recall the role Cincinnatus played in leading a proposal to amend the Cincinnati City Charter to provide an increase in councilmanic compensation. At the time, this seemed like a significant development, which it was; but I do wonder how the present membership of Cincinnatus would evaluate the consequences of that charter amendment in this 75th anniversary year of the Association.

David D. Black

President, 1966-1967

To: John Simpkinson

Re: CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION AT 75
MEMORIES OF A 70 YEAR OLD

Date: June 1, 1996

You're just like your old man - conning people into contributing to your project at the last minute.

It was he and Bob Acomb who conned me into running the Cincinnatus Statue Committee during a breakfast October 8, 1979. Long after the Riverfront Committee's ill-fated Symbolon national design contest in the early '70s (we had to announce "no winner" in the Hall of Mirrors).

Long after my officer years ('63-'67), and long after the formation of panels and my chairmanship of the Education Panel ('68-'70). In those years, reporting committees were comprised only of members who spent weeks preparing their talks. No "guest experts." We did reports ourselves.

So the statue project got started because Sink and Bob wanted a dramatic representation of the story of General L. Q. Cincinnatus, who saved Rome, declined an emperor's role, and went back home to his farm. There was only an obscure stained glass window on a landing in City Hall to "tell the story." We knew that Karkadoulis (hereafter, just K) was a tough cookie to work with, but Bob said he could handle him. And we wrote progress payments into the contract when we chose his model.

I announced the statue project at the January 8, 1980, regular meeting. And I announced various kinds of lack of progress at meetings for eight years. K claimed that he was losing money all along, though we raised and earned some \$255,000 (leaving \$8,700 for a maintenance fund at GCF). We planned a presentation to the City for June 1983, but K missed that promise. We planned a presentation to the city for July 1984, Bob Acomb died, and K missed that deadline, too. K had made several other promises along the way, and the next was December 1984. And the next was March 1986. And the next was August 1986. Promise #13 was for November 1986.

We dedicated the statue before the regular meeting May 10, 1988. That time we did not invite the mayor of Rome as we had for two previous dedication plans.

Lesson for newer members: Be careful with whom you have breakfast.

Yours,

David D. Black

Frank G. Davis

President, 1970 -1971

TO THE CINCINNATUS ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE:

Well, I was up by Vielerts on Wine Street, and while I was washing down my bretzel, who should come stomping up to my table but Der Old Rhonelanders.

Hah, dumkopf, he snarled, vas you effer in Zinzinnatus?

Yes, I was even president back in 1970-71.

Vell, vye didn't you do nuttings in your administrading? Before dot, det vas big doings mit der pooblic schules Bust-going, und der Camel Report Foolishness.

Yes, but the Education Panel worked for passing the school levies, and ...

Hah, but in all dem days dos Zinzinnatuses vas by Columbus going to get schule supportings, und bromoting ein state ingum tax mit dot Irisher Gilligin, und riverorunt deweloping mit dot Zink Simpkinsun and dot Pob Acomb. Und back in nineteen zixty-eight it vas, dat dey efen inwited der broads by a regliar meeting. Like dey said: "Bring your vife or girl-friend, or bote if you haf der raw courage."

Yes, Vice President Frazer said it was "Your first chance to bring your wife to a regular meeting." We talked about landlords and tenants in the Cincinnati ghetto.

Bah, dumkopf! Talking, always talking! Vye don't dey neffer do nuddings no more?

The biggest think, er, thing we have always done is educate and advise our members so that they can participate knowledgeable in civic affairs both in and out of Cincinnati.

Vell, I guess dot is zumting. Not much, but zumting. How's about annuder cold vun, dumkopf?

Charles Edwards Downton, III

President, 1994-1995

CINCINNATUS' 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Never underestimate the power of a group of citizens, strongly committed. Not only can they influence change, over time it's been shown to be the only way that major change is initiated. These words (or some similar) have been attributed to Margaret Mead. Seventy-five years of Cincinnatus history bears them out. From the original issue of improving the city of Cincinnati by moving to the city manager form of government, to riverfront redevelopment, to the Museum Center at Union Terminal, to continual work with the Cincinnati Public Schools, to the current work on city charter reform, Cincinnatus members have been strongly committed to working for a better Cincinnati. They have initiated change!

What makes Cincinnatus so unique? Its members. The people, who, for whatever reason, are attracted to its membership. More than 30 years ago, Louis Tucker in his book Cincinnati's Citizen Crusaders asked what it is that prompts people to become members of Cincinnatus. He then attempted to answer his own question. He said,

I am frank to confess that I cannot ascertain the motivational impulse of the members of Cincinnatus. I merely regard them as normal human beings, which is to say that they are complex, paradoxical, unpredictable, a compound of rationality and irrationality, activated by selfishness and altruism, by love, and by anger - and by principle and affection for their city. One fact is certain. They do sacrifice precious time and energy and engage in these activities. And while they often disagree - and violently on occasion - on the methods by which Cincinnati can become a "better" city, their collective orientation is forever fixed upon betterment. Like the young men of Athens, they strive unceasingly to "quicken the public's sense of civic duty" and are sincerely determined to "transmit this city not only not less but greater, better, and more beautiful" than it was transmitted to them.

What an apt description of members of the Cincinnatus Association. Some things don't change over 75 years.

Lawrence R. Elleman

President; 1993 -1994

REMARKS FOR CINCINNATUS' 75TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

In the fall of 1993, The Cincinnatus Association presented to the Greater Cincinnati community the Citizens Crusader Carillon, which was placed at the east end of Sawyer Point, the spot of the original Losantiville Settlement that later became Cincinnati, Ohio. The purpose of the carillon was to provide a monument to volunteerism in Cincinnati.

I happened to be the president of Cincinnatus at the time and was, therefore, elected to speak at the dedication ceremony. While preparing my remarks for the dedication, I noticed the plaque in front of the statue of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus at the other end of Sawyer Point. That plaque states simply "The Spirit of Cincinnatus."

In thinking about the "Spirit of Cincinnatus," some of us began to discuss what we could do to further that spirit among Cincinnatus members, and from that discussion arose the idea of the Citizen Crusader Award, which Cincinnatus has given to outstanding members beginning in the spring of 1994.

So what is the "Spirit of Cincinnatus"? It is like old Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who came to the aid of Rome at its time of need. He won a glorious battle against another city-state, turned down the opportunity to become emperor, and then went back to plowing his fields. He did not necessarily crave recognition. He was not a professional public servant or a major business leader, but he was a volunteer in the effort to make his community a better place. That is what The Cincinnatus Association has been all about for the last 75 years.

J. Howard Frazer

President, 1969 -1970

Dear Cincinnatus Association Members:

I send you my best wishes and sincere congratulations on completing 75 productive years. I am very proud to have served as president of The Cincinnatus Association in the 1969-70 year. I can't believe that more than 25 years have gone by since then.

While we did not always function as Cincinnati's Citizen Crusaders, we did always function as an informed and interested group of citizens who truly wanted to do the best thing for the Greater Cincinnati area.

Many of our Tuesday evening meetings were learning sessions for me. I gained a great deal of knowledge about Cincinnati, its problems, and its achievements.

Each meeting was for me an interesting and informative session, as well as a very pleasant and happy social experience. I became well acquainted with a good number of people who have contributed to our community and to our country. Many of them are still friends of mine today.

I hope that you are still enjoying and learning from the meetings as I did. I believe that Cincinnatus is an organization that will continue to do great things for our community. The need certainly exists. I am sure that the present members of Cincinnatus have the intelligence, the ability, the desire, and the courage to keep moving our city forward.

We have had great members and great accomplishments in the past. I am sure that you will continue your contributions and our Cincinnatus traditions for many years to come. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely yours,
Howard Frazer

Philip O. Geier, Jr.
President, 1956-1957

THE CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION

As I reflect on my 40+ years of membership in The Cincinnatus Association and on its accomplishments prior to my being a member, I note that the Association has always been comprised of community leaders of varying backgrounds who led and helped form public opinion and action on important civic and public questions.

Both the Association and its members acting as individuals had a large input into the government reform movement of the 1920s and 1930s, which ended bossism and its related corruption in our community. Many accomplishments took place in the areas of city planning, a master plan and urban development, public education, flood control and water pollution, and of improving and lessening the tensions of minority citizens in regard to housing, schools, health, and police relations.

However, there are problems and unresolved issues in practically all of these areas, and they have to be minimized or solved in the years ahead. The race problem, and the resulting tensions, is still acute.

Improvements can and must be made in public education, police relations, flood control, water pollution, and in the areas of master planning and urban development. We have to ensure the further conservation of our natural resources of land, water, and trees. And a large and difficult current problem is how to sell all factions of the public on the great advantages to all citizens of our area - except possibly certain politicians - on the consolidation of city and county governments. Where this consolidation has occurred in other areas, better government at much less cost has resulted.

So, The Cincinnatus Association and its members, acting as individuals in some cases, have many worthwhile challenges ahead for the improvement of our area and a better life for its citizens.

Richard E. Glaser
President, 1986-1987

In 1971, new Cincinnatus members were informed that they were expected to give at least one 15-minute presentation each year, as well as to participate actively in the work of their panel. Failure to do so might result in being “drummed out of the corps.”

Because it was felt that members who performed their own research into the issues became better informed and maintained stronger interest, outside experts were rarely used. Today, however, Cincinnatus seems to rely more on the experts to inform and influence opinions.

Visionaries such as Ewart Simpkinson and Bob Acomb foresaw the potential of Cincinnati’s obsolete industrial riverfront. These members had a passion, a commitment, a “fire in the belly” that led them to accomplish a dramatic quality-of-life improvement in our civic environment. Through their efforts, Sawyer Point was born.

Today, Cincinnatus has another opportunity to serve as an agent of change in improving Cincinnati’s quality of life: assisting the City in its efforts to reverse its decline and emerge again as a viable, exciting place in which to work, live, and visit.

We can, for example, articulate the need for a comprehensive master plan that will give clarity to our blurred vision and replace the City’s current ad hoc development process. We also can oppose the unfortunate plan to build on the riverfront two large, monolithic stadiums, with their ancillary parking; they will create yet another concrete barrier, similar to Fort Washington Way, between the downtown core and the river, and discourage new housing on the riverfront.

Cincinnatus has made a difference for our city, and can do so again. We need only a few good men and women with the courage to challenge, to speak out - and with “fire in the belly.”

James H. Hayes

President, 1980-1981

To the Membership of The Cincinnatus Association and Honored Guests
on Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of The Cincinnatus Association:

It was my privilege to serve The Cincinnatus Association as president in 1980-81. During that year, Cincinnatus started a committee under the leadership of Dave Black to raise funds for a statue of the Citizen Crusader Cincinnatus to be erected in Sawyer Park. The funds were raised and the statue was eventually dedicated.

The statue of Cincinnatus at Sawyer Park honors the best traditions of this Association. The Association has spearheaded numerous projects throughout the years, but none is more important than the push, through the Friends of the Parks, to develop the eastern riverfront and to help create Sawyer Park, Yeatman's Cove, and the Serpentine Wall.

Cincinnatus should be proud of its efforts.

Sincerely,

James H. Hayes

Smith Hickenlooper, III

President, 1984-1985

THOUGHTS ON THE REVOLUTION THAT ALMOST WAS

It is a rare privilege to be part of an effort to restructure a whole system of government. It is rarer still to be afforded the opportunity to tell the story of what happened and be given the opportunity to tell the tale through the filter of hindsight.

When I joined Cincinnatus, my early interests were in local government structure and the revitalization of Cincinnati. I found a home in the County Government Panel. Quickly, I realized that Cincinnati, as we all have come to know the 8- to 10-county standard metropolitan area, had been in decline for some time. My initial concept was that Cincinnati would become the nucleus of the financial, business, cultural, retail, and sports activities, as well as the entertainment mecca of a region that would reach as far as Louisville and Lexington on the south; Huntington, Charleston, and Pittsburgh to the east; Columbus to the north; and Indianapolis to the west. It seemed like an ambitious dream, but one fully within reason.

My enthusiasm and youthful idealism was shattered when a number of people, most notably my good friend Bud Anderegg, pointed out that the core of Cincinnati, specifically Hamilton County, lacked any substantive government. Without any kind of unified effort from the middle, attraction of the outlying areas was almost impossible. What passed for government in Hamilton County was, and still is, merely an administrative arm of the State of Ohio. We lack the very foundation on which to build the critical mass to make this region vital.

In the middle 1970s, the County Government Panel moved into high gear. Through the efforts of a number of dedicated Cincinnatus members, we quickly found out the impediments to forming a local government. To our surprise, there were many. Diligently, we worked to understand, meet, and overcome each of these hurdles. In conducting our investigations, we came to realize that other groups in the area had come to the same conclusions and were, in their own way, working to make the concept of a local Hamilton County government a reality. By the end of the 1970s, we had put together a coalition consisting of Cincinnatus, the Cincinnati Business Committee, the League of Women Voters, the Womans City Club, and the Cincinnati Bar Association. With manpower and teamwork from the representative members, and with a financial grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, we moved ahead with the task of putting together the structure of a new, home-rule version of government for Hamilton County.

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(Smith Hickenlooper, III, continued)

Through most of 1979 and into 1980, we held hearings and evaluated positions on the structure of county government. In the end, the coalition produced a viable charter to establish a home-rule government in Hamilton County. Under the auspices of Cincinnatus, we presented the charter to the community.

Though the process to that point was successful, going forward proved to be more difficult. While everyone involved with the formation of home-rule government was convinced of the necessity of the endeavor, we soon learned that the average citizen did not understand the problem. Even worse, when the problem and its ramifications were explained, and the benefits of the solution extolled, the most we could hope for was a glazed ambivalence. As a result of apathy, more than anything else, and fear of change in the established order by the local parties, the work of many years came to a screeching halt. The beautifully crafted charter has never made it to the ballot. In fact, with the exception of a strong, but brief, effort at revival in the early 1990s, the charter has languished, and the course of Hamilton County government has plodded its pace as it has since the mid-19th century.

In the past 15 years, there have been some stirrings of economic and cultural rebirth in the Cincinnati SMA. I remain convinced, however, that Cincinnati would boom if only we could shore up the hollow core and give the entire region a solid base on which to build. Only with a strong home-rule government will we ever have that base. I hope that, as we move into the 21st century, this dream will become a reality. Perhaps as Cincinnatus celebrates its 100th birthday, we can also celebrate the establishment of a clear, realistic home-rule government here in Hamilton County.

Robert W. Hilton, Jr.
President, 1971-1972

EVEN A SMALL ACTION IS BETTER THAN ENDLESS STUDY

Several weeks ago, John Simpkinson asked me to write *on one page* my thoughts on what *Cincinnati* needed to do to regain the "fire in the belly," which characterized it at its birth when it was founded shortly after World War 1. At that time, Captain Victor Heintz returned from World War I and was appalled to find the city sunk in corruption. Cincinnati gave birth to the City Charter Committee, the only Reform movement in the country to live more than a dozen years. The two organizations made Cincinnati, according to *Life* magazine in 1957, "the best governed city in the United States."

We were militantly pro-Cincinnati and against national political partisanship treating our city as a stepchild. In the spirit of Murray Seashongood, who said that he liked to quote himself "to liven up the conversation," and Charles Taft, who said, "there is no Democratic or Republican way to pave a street - only an honest and efficient or a corrupt way," I say that we need to remember our first principles and put local government first in dealing with local problems. Cincinnati should not be a financial milk-cow for national political parties. We need: (1) to prevent council members being elected on the basis of whoever spends the most on his political campaign, (2) merit selection of local judges, (3) civil service being placed under local rule rather than under those of the State of Ohio, (4) annexation rules must be liberalized so that our city isn't economically strangled, (5) earnings taxes for all governmental units in the county should be collected by the county and distributed among governmental units as is now done with real estate taxes.

These things need to be *done* - not studied to death. In Biblical language, "If the trumpet giveth forth with an uncertain sound, who is to follow?" Cincinnati should blow our city's horn loud and clear. In local matters, we are *Cincinnatians* - not stepchildren of any national political party.

Donald E. Hoffman

President, 1992-1993

REFLECTIONS ON CINCINNATUS

When Bob Allen and Bill Clark first talked to me about joining Cincinnatus, I could hardly believe that I might become a member of an organization that I had heard about for many years. I never dreamed that I would be asked to become a member. I was so excited!

Well, that excitement continues today!

When I think of Cincinnatus, I think about Ted Berry who interrupted a panel report, stood up, asked the membership to vote to suspend the rules and vote to support a citywide vote on PR (proportional representation). Well, the membership overruled the Executive Committee and voted to support Ted's motion! What a night!

I think about Sink Simpkinson, everyone's mentor, sitting at a table for four in the middle of the University Club dining room, talking very seriously about improving the riverfront or recruiting volunteers to work on the Education Panel.

I think about the "big change" when women were allowed to join Cincinnatus. Just think for a minute about the marvelous dialogue we have had when so many women with excellent leadership talents like Judy Van Ginkle, Valerie Newell, Joan Hammond, and Carol Davidow entered our debates.

When I think to the future, I see an even more active Cincinnatus presence. The past is prologue, we are told. We have so much to study, discuss, and debate before we move out as advocates.

Will we find Cincinnatus members leading the way to a stronger school system, or an improved transportation system, or a more international perspective in commerce? I would bet on it.

Douglas L. Hoge
President, 1960-1961

“REFLECTIONS” OF THE CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION

The irrepressible “Sink” Simpkinson recruited me to join The Cincinnatus Association about 1953, and I soon learned that it was almost impossible to say no to Sink’s many requests for my participation in Cincinnatus projects.

In 1948, the City Planning Commission had published its new master plan, which envisioned cleaning up and redeveloping the riverfront to make it accessible to the public, and The Cincinnatus Association decided to get deeply involved in an effort to bring the recommendations about. Many club programs were carried out to build interest in the project.

In 1962, the Association held a meeting in a tent at the newly constructed interim Yeatman’s Cove Park at Front and Broadway. It was highly publicized to support the pending riverfront tax levy. Leaders of this effort included Simpkinson, Robert Acomb, Oliver Gale, and many other Cincinnatus members. A speakers’ bureau was formed of Cincinnatus members, headed by David Black.

To further stimulate interest in support of the tax levy, Cincinnatus decided to conduct a competition among prominent architects to design a “Symbolon” structure on the riverfront to symbolize Cincinnati, similar to the Arch in St. Louis. A large luncheon was arranged downtown to announce the winning design. To the amazement and chagrin of the organization, the judges announced “no winner” because there was no consensus.

What seemed to be a disaster at first, however, turned into a public relations bonanza, creating public support, which helped pass the tax levy. Riverfront redevelopment proceeded forward, as hoped, along with the Convention Center. A few years later, The Cincinnatus Association donated the large statue of Cincinnatus, which was placed in Sawyer Point adjacent to Yeatman’s Cove. Many of us feel this was the Symbolon, at last. It was my privilege to be involved in all of these interesting activities.

Robert L. Kreidler
President, 1974-1975

It was about 1970 or 1971 - the year before, I think, that I started as treasurer for Cincinnatus, working up the chain. That was when the Cincinnati School levy failed so very badly, one of the first levies that really went down, shocking the community. So Cincinnatus started a speakers' bureau and all of us who volunteered to speak were given assignments at homes for the aging, PTAs, many church groups, and different volunteer groups. I remember speaking at two homes for the aging (where I got polite receptions); we had been worried that some older people wouldn't want to vote for school levies anymore since their children were grown. At one dinner meeting with a group of older citizens at the Knox Presbyterian Church, I sat next to a very nice gentleman and exchanged pleasantries during dinner, made my pitch in support of the upcoming levy after the meal, answered questions, came back to the table, and sat down. At the end of the meeting, this gentleman said, "Mr. Kreidler, you don't remember me, but when you were in the fifth grade I was your shop teacher on Saturdays. We had a little volunteer program and you were without a doubt the worst shop student I ever saw. Thank God you learned how to speak!"

Well, I guess we all spoke pretty well because the levy passed overwhelmingly that fall and I know Cincinnatus felt very proud about the results.

Another strong and important memory for me was working on behalf of the Riverfront, which was of course our pet project, and for the Convention Center expansion project. Ewart "Sink" Simpkinson, who was really the spirit of Cincinnatus, told me about his dream for the river and the city when I was considering a return to Cincinnati to attend law school and live after college. This was about 1959. Sink took me on a walking tour that started down at the riverbank, walked all the way up to Mt. Adams - past where the condominiums are now and then up by the fire station - then downtown to the top of the Carew Tower to a magnificent view. I have always been indebted to him for that because it was one of the main reasons I came back to the city of my boyhood and the city that I've always loved so much.

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(Robert L. Kreidler, continued)

Sink was amazing. He never gave up on his dreams, and with so many members of Cincinnatus working alongside him, his vision has come to fruition, especially the riverfront. As I remember the story, Sink was in charge of raising the money for the riverfront park, now called Sawyer Point. For more than a year, he prodded and pulled everyone he could to "buy into" the dream. After a year or so, one of the committee members, Charles Sawyer, once U.S. Secretary of Commerce and then a lawyer at Taft, Stettinius and Hollister, called Sink on Christmas Eve. He remarked to Sink, "I've got some news. I have been so busy that I've not had a chance to raise any money for your project - I'm so embarrassed." Sink said, "This is spoiling Christmas." Stated Sawyer, "So, I'm just going to write you a check for a million dollars." Sink said he almost passed out - he had to sit down and get his breath for about five minutes!

Cincinnatus has always been important to me. It is a good cross-section of political views, and I have always thought that the members have, for the most part, checked their politics at the door so that they could try to help the city without personal encumbrances mucking up the issues.

Cincinnatus has been a great contribution to the betterment of our city for the last 75 years, and hopefully for the 750 years to go!

Michael Krug

President; 1983-1984

Some of my stronger memories of Cincinnatus start back when I was a young lad in my 20s and Sink Simpkinson cornered me at church to tell me that it was important to prepare myself to make a difference for my city. And, after I agreed that it would indeed be an important thing to do, he made arrangements for me to join him at a Cincinnatus meeting and made me join. Even today, I keep his unforgettable message strong in my life of what we, as citizens, owe to our city and how important our work can be at Cincinnatus.

Another recollection is being on the Executive Committee with Jim Lawrence. One of the major tasks of the Executive Committee is to oversee the recruitment of new people. Jim Lawrence was constantly pulling us back to key principles of membership: it was not whom you knew or whom you liked, but who had a demonstrated record of contributing to the city of Cincinnati outside of one's work, in ways that had no personal gain.

I also recall the profound respect I had at each meeting for the presenting panel for the evening - for the people who had "day" jobs but who had spent hours and hours and hours of their personal time researching a subject to the point that they could stand before their peers and make a cogent analysis and recommendation for action. To me, this is what is meant behind the phrase "Citizen Crusader."

For a strong future, I believe in the mission of the Association to prepare individuals to take leadership in our city. These individuals must get involved each year in issues that are of importance to them, by serving on a panel, doing research, presenting findings. It is not coming passively to meetings and listening to lectures - it is being involved in issues in our city for which we have a passion.

James K. L. Lawrence

President, 1985-1986

As I reflect on my most active years with our Cincinnati Association, I am most proud of our efforts to educate ourselves about issues of the moment in Cincinnati before we stepped into action. We resisted the temptation to call in guest speakers to provide us with background information and the current state of affairs on an issue that a panel was presenting to the general body. Instead, we did the investigation, we assembled the facts, and we drew conclusions as to what needed to be accomplished. Panels were self-educated and self-informing on The Future of Arts Funding in Cincinnati, Alternative Schools, County Government Reform, The Heritage Center, and The Bicentennial, to name a few. Sometimes we were wrong. Sometimes misguided. But we learned from our mistakes that action at times was premature or simply inappropriate. But when we acted, we did so with great zeal because the conviction was in the main our own. When the "aha" came from within rather than as the effect of our guests persuasive presentation, our call to action was stronger, realistic, and generally more durable.

Carry on in our tradition.

Thomas A. Luebbers

President, 1987-1988

My presidential term included the first half of 1988, which was the year in which the statue of our namesake, Cincinnatus, which the Association had commissioned, was at long last-dedicated in Sawyer Point.

I've always looked upon that statue as especially symbolic of our organization; not just because it represents the old Roman whose name we took, but because its story and surroundings represent one of the traits I most admire about Cincinnatus: perseverance toward a worthy goal, and (sometimes) success in attaining it. Veteran Cincinnatus members will recall the tales of the tribulations that the statue committee endured with the sculptor (and his apparently equally difficult wife). The fact that good old Cincinnatus finally made it to his post is in itself an example of perseverance. But the more important example of our Association's perseverance and tenacity in working for our city is the very place where Cincinnatus stands - the riverfront park itself.

The riverfront park system's success today is due in great measure to Cincinnatus, and especially to a few of our members who took on this cause with remarkable vigor. They saw something that they were convinced would be to the city's good, they played a large part in seeing it through to reality, and they did it all as volunteers.

It has always seemed to me that the essence of Cincinnatus consists of just such stories. Our members take on difficult tasks not because its their job, but simply because they see that the tasks are important, then they follow those tasks through, even though it may take years. We haven't always been able to point to the success of a Sawyer Point. But we have been - and I believe continue to be - able to provide the city with people like those who labored on the riverfront: committed, energetic volunteers working for the good of the city. Here's to another 75 years.

Charles H. Melville

President, 1973-1974

CININNATUS ASSOCIATION 1969-1974

It is simply unbelievable that it's been more than 20 years since I was president of Cincinnatus. As I reflect on that period of my life and on The Cincinnatus Association, two things really stand out in my mind.

First, I was recruited for Cincinnatus by Ewart W. Simpkinson. "Sink" has been honored many times by this Association and countless others for his civic contributions to the city and community, but I would like to add, one more time, my personal reflections.

Sink was more or less my father's age, and yet he actively sought out and recruited for the Association business and professional people in the community. He talked, cajoled, persuaded, and, in every possible way, got people involved. Then he continued to lead by his example of untiring efforts to work for the good of the city and the community.

In today's popular culture, there is a lot of talk about "role models" and "mentors." Well, Sink was that for me and much more. He was an inspiration for all of us.

My second recollection is of the formation of the panel structure of the Association. In the early days of my membership, the Association was primarily informational. That is, the meetings were for the purpose of informing the members on all important community issues of the day, but involvement was largely on a personal or an individual basis.

The objective of the panel structure was to provide an ongoing focus for activities of the Association, and to provide a vehicle for more direct involvement by the Association as an organization. I wish I could take credit for the idea, and I can't even remember who came up with the idea.

But in any event, four panels were created, and Dave Black (I think) was the first chairman of the panel on public education (the Schools Panel). Under Dave's leadership, the panel took a long look at school financing and became an active participant in support of a series of school levies on the ballot at that time.

It is rewarding to see that the panel structure appears alive and well after all those years.

Valerie L. Newell

President, 1995-1996

CINCINNATUS: A PERSONAL IMPACT

Cincinnatus has been an awe-inspiring experience for me. I will not say every meeting was awe-inspiring because, as most of us know, sometimes our meetings can get long-winded and even down-right boring! When I look around, however, I am always inspired by the people of Cincinnatus and their passion. People who have made a real difference in our community. It never fails to impress me when I review the names of our past presidents. I am humbled to be part of such a wonderful tradition and legacy.

In Cincinnatus, I have learned how to take an active and responsible part in the politics and government of our city. I am interested in civic affairs in a much different and meaningful way because I have learned through Cincinnatus that everyday citizens can have a true impact on what really goes on in our city. I am very grateful to those who made my membership and presidency possible.

Richard H. Peake, Jr.
President, 1963-1964

REFLECTIONS ON THE CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION

On this 75th anniversary; congratulations to all who have kept alive the spirit of CINCINNATUS. May its legacy be the forerunner of its future.

The beat goes on.
The music changes.
The volume changes.
The tempo changes.
But the beat goes on!

Over the years, the character of Cincinnatus has shown many facets. Some most prominent in my mind might be described as:

- confrontational crusader conciliator
- reformer initiator
- drumbeater catalyst forum
- idea incubator locus of leaders

There were others too! Each has had its time and place and made its contributions.

Through it all, the constant that I see is the determined commitment of its individual members to coalesce in ways that advance projects important to the people of metropolitan Cincinnati.

Its niche in Cincinnati is unique. Looking to the second millennium, let us hope that it will pursue its mission with a vision worthy of its past.

William R. Seaman
President, 1950-1951

REFLECTIONS

Soon after I returned from the Navy at the end of World War II, Ewart "Sink" Simpkinson, whom I knew before the war, invited me to a Cincinnatus meeting and followed that by proposing me for membership. Murray Seasongood helped me locate in this city and, since I also had worked with Charlie Taft on a nonlegal project, the origin and history of Cincinnati greatly appealed to me. When I found the opportunity to work with contemporaries such as Howard Morgans, Phil Geier, Ed Merkel, Hayward Gay, George Thayer, and Bill (E.A.) Snow, I felt Cincinnatus was the best place to focus any energy I was able to devote to community development.

The programs and committee assignments gave me a new familiarity with city and county government and their major officeholders. Greater Cincinnati today owes a great deal to Cincinnatus for its efforts - in bringing about a great master plan and a large number of specific improvements. May the Association continue to reflect the same enthusiasm for civic improvement that was so characteristic of Sink Simpkinson!

John E. Simpkinson
President, 1978-1979

HOW CINCINNATUS WORKS ...

It works best when each of us holds ourselves accountable for our goal of doing good in the community and when we do it with vigor - fire in the belly. Without these we falter. We inherited a great legacy and a great obligation. We are at our best when we have:

Vision - without a dream we have no direction. Most of our accomplishments started with someone being upset with the status quo. It bothered me that we as a country, let alone as a city, got nothing from our country's bicentennial. The Bicentennial Committee percolated under the surface until 1980.

Focus - most successes came when we had a finite target. The Bicentennial Committee shifted its name to The Heritage Center. We wanted a physical legacy, not just a year-long celebration. Something that gathered all the things in our history that we can be proud of and share with out-of-town tourists.

Passion - the ingredient that is most often missing. Too often we have had outside speakers rather than members who dig in and provide the background and present both sides. Perseverance is a symptom of a commitment. Dave Black had it for a statue, Gus Morgan had it for our adopting Merry Junior High, my father had it first for Citizen School Committee and then the riverfront, Mike Krug had it for reorganizing us, Skip Hickenlooper battled for regional government, and there were a legion of others. All of these overcame initial and continuing resistance. Neither the Historical Society nor the Natural History museums wanted to be in the same room until Al Tuchfarber's research indicated the voters would tax themselves for a joint effort.

Action - the last link that often takes the form of a resolution from the reporting panel. Most of the time it dies there. We had enough gumption to ask Sy Murray for an appointment to discuss the Terminal, based solely on his knowing the Association. Individually, few of the members have political, corporate, or financial clout; yet, united under the banner of Cincinnatus, we can make a significant difference in our hometown.

Cincinnatus can offer us a conduit to perpetuate the legacy of doing good things for our city.

John G. Slauson

President, 1990-1991

1990-1991 was a year of closure for some projects and a year of new beginnings for others - nothing unusual for Cincinnatus! The Museum Center renovations were in their final stages and we were focusing on protecting the neighborhood from radical development as a result of the new complex. This was the embryo of one of Cincinnatus' finer achievements - the effort by Chuck Downton and his local Government Panel to nurture relationships between the West End Community Council and City Hall.

The cyclical effort to reform county government was given new life, though no more successfully than its many predecessors. The Health Systems Panel made an outstanding contribution in its study on the availability of health care for the indigent - an issue that is again topical.

What I remember most, however, was how exciting (and easy) it was to preside over an Association consisting of so many leaders. Cincinnatus has always seemed unusual to me because it's a working group made up of so many people who were already leaders in their own fields and great achievers. Usually such a collection is found in an honorary or social group. The Association is different. It is made up of chiefs who are also Indians and doers. I have never seen egos or status concerns get in the way of getting the job done. CEOs, professors, professional people, and government leaders - all working together for the best of the community. It was truly a pleasure to serve with such a group.

Alexander Stolley
President, 1972-1973

MEMORIES OF THE CINCINNATUS ASSOCIATION

Cincinnatus offered me and other young executives and professionals the wonderful opportunity to become involved in the affairs of our community. Older members shared their experience with us, and we also were privileged to contact various administrative groups in the community as we pursued our program assignments. We even made meaningful contributions occasionally.

As I review the meetings in my year as president, 1972-73, two programs stand out. First, our spotlight on the need to save the marvelous tile murals in the railway terminal, much of which was scheduled to be torn down. We helped start an effort that eventually raised money to move those murals to the Greater Cincinnati Airport.

The most intriguing program, I thought, was based upon Carl Solway's creative idea to make Cincinnati "The City of Fountains." He felt our close relationship with the river should be used to give a special character to the community. He visualized a future in which fountains of many sizes and descriptions would grace every neighborhood and lend a unique aura to our community. Unfortunately, we were never able to arouse enough interest to see this idea become reality.

Cincinnatus made a major contribution to my personal "quality of life," and I hope it is continuing to do the same for many, many others as the years go by.

Edward M. Thayer
President, 1962-1963

Trying to remember events that took place 35 years ago is difficult for one who has trouble remembering where he ate dinner last night, but here's my effort.

The Cincinnatus Association was a wonderful group of concerned citizens active in community affairs, which they studied carefully, examining current practices and leading the way in new ones.

During my regime, emphasis was placed on rebuilding the waterfront, sparked chiefly by Ewart Simpkinson, an insurance salesman, commonly called "Sink." Thanks to his persistence, we achieved our initial goal of clearing part of the riverfront, only to have it wiped out by the building of the stadium.

To stimulate public interest, they suggested that a contest be staged with sculptors, architects, and artists to create a "Symbolon," which would signify the importance of the waterfront in the city's life and history.

A large luncheon was held at the Netherland Plaza with all the city leaders - mayor, council, corporate presidents - with every part of Cincinnati represented. As we sat breathlessly awaiting the award, it was announced that there was no winner.

Despite the setback, Sink kept plugging on and finally succeeded in getting Sawyer Point Park - complete with flying pigs (but that was after my time).

Alfred J. Tuchfarber
President, 1989-1990

CINCINNATUS

Cincinnatus is history.

Cincinnatus is success ... and quiet pride.

Cincinnatus is failure ... and frustration ... and the patience and strength to try again.

For success ... look to good government ... and a dry, safe city as the river rises. Look to a gleaming riverfront ... clear bell tones ... and Lucius Quinctius. Revel in a revitalized Union Terminal ... and many small, meaningful contributions.

Come Cincinnati ... come to Cincinnatus ... hear the measured, professional debate ... see the collegiality and friendship.

Come Cincinnatus ... come to a diverse city, county, and region with complex problems and voices crying for help.

Cincinnatus is people ... good-hearted people ... dedicated people ...honorable people ... talented people.

Do not grow old now, Cincinnatus ... Cincinnati needs you. Adjust ... change ... grow ... and move ahead.

*Dedicated to The Cincinnatus Association on its 75th Anniversary
May 1996*

Judith B. Van Ginkel

President, 1991-1992

In May of 1991, I was elected as the first female president of The Cincinnatus Association. For more than 70 years, Cincinnatus had been an important part of the Cincinnati community, and I was honored to be the president of this illustrious group of carefully chosen citizens. I had served Cincinnatus as a board member, treasurer, secretary, and vice president, and I had the privilege of working with the fine and dedicated membership on panels, special projects, and the Executive Committee.

I must admit that prior to the election, I spent a significant amount of time contemplating what Cincinnatus meant and what my role should be as its leader. I knew that the strength of Cincinnatus was in its membership - its people - intelligent, insightful, determined, enthusiastic people. And I knew that these people had served as the community conscience since 1921. What, I wondered, can I bring to this group that will help the organization move ahead and fulfill the goals established many years ago? As a leader among leaders, could I improve the dedication? The commitment? The community conscience? Clearly not.

What I could do, and what I worked to accomplish during my presidential year, was to ensure that there was support for creativity. That an environment was in place in which our leader-members could find opportunities in the unpredictable and surprises in the challenges.

We had fun and I am proud of what we accomplished. But late at night, when the world is dark, the relationships are what linger. It was true yesterday, remains true today, and will be true tomorrow. And the relationships extend back 75 years to those people who gathered together to address a community problem and founded an organization.

We have a mission, and we have a heritage to uphold. The best that any of us can say is that we stand tall next to those who preceded us.

Bob Westheimer

President, 1968-1969

THANKS, "SINK"

We are celebrating our 75th, thanks to Sink Simpkinson, who brought Cincinnatus back from oblivion about 40 years ago.

I remember well, being recruited then, and most of my contemporaries can tell of a visit from Sink.

My best memories date from the late '60s. There was a planning meeting on my back porch. Dick Hait suggested the idea of ongoing panels. We all agreed. This was a major step forward for Cincinnatus.

Another recollection: Charlie Taft came to most meetings prepared to comment. How to show respect for our most revered member and get on with the program was quite a challenge.

I have many more fond memories, but this is enough.